SC affirms forfeiture of Marcos jewelry collection

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The Supreme Court (SC) upheld the partial summary judgment of the Sandiganbayan ordering the forfeiture in favor of the government of the third jewelry collection of former first lady Imelda Marcos that was seized in 1986.

In a 21-page decision written by Chief Justice Ma. Lourdes Sereno, the high court's First Division denied the petition for certiorari filed by Marcos and her daughter Irene Marcos-Araneta which sought a reversal of the anti-graft court's Jan. 13, 2014 decision.

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The third jewelry collection known as the "Malacañang Collection," which based on the Sandiganbayan decision is assessed to be worth from $110,055 to $153,089, is composed of smaller and less expensive pieces that the Marcoses left behind when they fled during the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution.

The high court, in affirming the Sandiganbayan's decision, said the forfeiture was justified.

"The Sandiganbayan correctly held that the forfeiture was justified and that the Malacafiang Collection was subject to forfeiture," the high court said.

It pointed out that the legitimate income of the Marcoses had been pegged at US$ 304,372.43.136 only.

“We reiterate what we have already stated that whenever any public officer or employee has acquired during his incumbency an amount of property which is manifestly out of proportion to his salary as such public officer or employee and to his other lawful income and the income from legitimately acquired property, said property shall be presumed prima facie to have been unlawfully acquired.”

The high court said the Marcoses failed to satisfactorily show that the properties were lawfully acquired.

The court also did not give credence to the claim of the Marcoses that they were deprived of due process since they were not given the opportunity to prove that the pieces of jewelry were legally acquired.

“This allegation cannot be given credence for being utterly baseless,” the high court said.

The Malacañang Collection is kept in the vaults of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas along with the Roumeliotes and Hawaii collections.

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The 60-piece Roumeliotes Collection was seized from Demetriou Roumeliotes, a Greek national, at the Manila International Airport as he was about to leave the country in March 1986.

The Hawaii collection, meanwhile, comprises jewelry found in the family’s luggage when they arrived at the Honolulu International Airport on February 25, 1986. ***RAM***

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